United Nations

# Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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# Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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# Letter of transmittal

4 November 1998

Mr. Secretary-General,

After more than half a century of dispossession of the Palestinian people and at the threshold of a new millennium, it is more important than ever to promote rapid further progress in the peace process. The question of Palestine has reached a crossroads, and many crucial decisions will be made at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly and in the months to come. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Bureau have devoted much thought to ways in which to implement the mandate of the Committee in the most effective and useful manner, in order not only to strengthen international solidarity with the Palestinian people to bring about the realization of its inalienable rights but also to revitalize the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation that is so essential to the achievement of a lasting solution.

The Committee salutes your contribution to the promotion of a just and comprehensive settlement and to the improvement of economic prospects and cooperation throughout the region. The Committee pledges itself to intensify its own efforts in support of those undertaken by the international community to bring about an end to this conflict which has bedevilled the United Nations, cost countless lives and drained the resources of the region for such a long time.

In the hope that our work will make a constructive contribution to the deliberations of the General Assembly, I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 5 of Assembly resolution 52/49 of 9 December 1997. We especially draw your attention to the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee, contained in paragraphs 86 to 94 of its report.

The report covers the period from 5 November 1997 to 4 November 1998.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

*(Signed)* Ibra Deguène **Ka**
Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of
the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency
Mr. Kofi Annan
Secretary-General of the United Nations

# Chapter I.
# Introduction

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly in resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report[1] were endorsed by the Assembly as a basis for the solution to the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports,[2] the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. The Committee's recommendations could not be implemented, and the Assembly each year renewed the Committee's mandate and requested it to intensify its efforts in pursuit of its objectives.

3. The Committee welcomed the historic breakthrough in the peace process in 1993 and the subsequent establishment of new realities on the ground as important steps towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). At the same time, the Committee continued to work towards the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and to its own independent State, and to mobilize the needed international assistance and solidarity during the transitional period.

4. The stalemate in the peace process, which has continued during most of the past year despite the efforts by the co-sponsors and other interested parties to re-inject momentum into the negotiations, has caused extreme concern. In that regard, the Committee welcomed the signing, on 23 October 1998, of the Wye River Memorandum and expressed the hope that it would clear the way for further progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The Committee, however, has joined the international community in condemning the intensification of the policies and practices of occupation which are not only in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (the Fourth Geneva Convention),[3] and Security Council resolutions, but are also contrary to the spirit and the letter of the peace process, pose grave obstacles to its continuation and fuel mistrust, tension and violence by extremists.

5. Despite the glimmer of hope currently on the horizon, the Committee believes that the exacerbation of the situation on the ground calls for the redoubling of efforts by all concerned in order to ensure respect for international law and United Nations resolutions, and a speedy return to full and comprehensive negotiations and cooperation between the parties. As the organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, the Committee has supported, and participated actively in, all recent multilateral initiatives in this regard and intends to continue to do so to the best of its abilities.

# Chapter II.
# Mandate of the Committee

6. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was again renewed by the General Assembly in resolution 52/49 of 9 December 1997, in which the Assembly, *inter alia*: (a) endorsed the recommendations of the Committee[4] and requested it to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate; (b) authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-third session and thereafter; and (c) requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine.

7. In its resolution 52/50 of 9 December 1997, on the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources, including those required for the further development of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, and to ensure that it continues to discharge the tasks detailed in previous resolutions.

8. In its resolution 52/51 of 9 December 1997, on the special information programme on the question of Palestine, the Assembly requested the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme for the biennium 1998–1999, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

9. In carrying out its programme of work, the Committee also took into account General Assembly resolution 52/52 of 9 December 1997, in which the Assembly, *inter alia*, reaffirmed the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in all its aspects, expressed its full support for the ongoing peace process, and stressed the need for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination; the need for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967; and the need for resolving the problem of the Palestine refugees.

# Chapter III. Organization of work

## A. Membership and officers

10. By General Assembly decision 52/317 of 9 December 1997, South Africa and Namibia were appointed members of the Committee, increasing the membership to 25. The Committee was encouraged by this expression of growing support for its work. The Committee is accordingly composed of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yugoslavia.[5]

11. At its 235th meeting, on 5 February 1998, the Committee re-elected Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal) as Chairman, and re-elected Ravan A. G. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) and Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) as Vice-Chairmen and George Saliba (Malta) as Rapporteur.

12. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 1998.[6]

## B. Participation in the work of the Committee

13. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members and Permanent Observers to the United Nations desiring to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. In 1998, the Committee again welcomed as observers all the States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year.[7]

14. In accordance with established practice, the Permanent Observer of Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all its meetings and made observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau. In that regard, the Committee took note with satisfaction of the adoption by the General Assembly, by an overwhelming vote in favour, of resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998 on the participation of Palestine in the work of the United Nations, which conferred upon Palestine additional rights and privileges of participation in the sessions and work of the General Assembly and the international conferences convened under the auspices of the Assembly or other organs of the United Nations, as well as in United Nations conferences.

# Chapter IV. Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

15. Pursuant to its mandate, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People continued to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and, in particular, to monitor the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the developments in the peace process.

16. The Committee followed closely and with increasing concern the efforts made throughout the year to restart the peace process. In the Committee's view, the reluctance of the Government of Israel to abide by the existing agreements precluded the possibility of a constructive dialogue and the continuation of the peace process in accordance with the agreed timetable. Essential aspects of the agreements, such as further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank, safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Gaza airport and seaport, and the release of prisoners, remained unimplemented in the year under review. The Committee welcomed the signing at Wye Mills, Maryland, United States of America, on 23 October 1998, of the Wye River Memorandum and accompanying documents, which

provided, *inter alia*, for: further Israeli redeployment from 13 per cent of the West Bank; the steps to be taken by the parties in the area of security; the renewal of negotiations on safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; the agreement to address without delay the issue of the Port of Gaza; and the commitment to resume permanent status negotiations. The Committee viewed the conclusion of this agreement as an important breakthrough in the efforts to restart the peace process. The Committee also expressed the hope that the Memorandum would be implemented in full and would restore the atmosphere of trust and confidence between the parties, enabling them to move without delay to the permanent status negotiations.

17. One of the principal stumbling blocks to the peace process has been the growth of settlements throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, in pursuance of the stated policy of the Government of Israel Government. To encourage settlement, prospective settlers are offered various incentives in the form of low-rate loans, favourable purchase prices and grants. In addition to the expansion of existing settlements, new ones have been or are being established. According to reports, these included, in late November 1997, a new settlement known as "Oranim" in the "Modi'in" block, west of Ramallah; in June 1998, a new settlement known as "Hadar Betar", south of Bethlehem, as well as approval for the construction of 150 new housing units in "Kiryat Arba", east of Hebron; allocation by the Knesset Finance Committee of some US$24 million for the construction of 400 new units in village settlements, which are essentially new areas on the outskirts of existing settlements; and approval by the Ministry of Defence of the transfer of 150 mobile homes to the settlements of "Dolev", "Neve Tzuf" and "Shavut Rachel", in response to a campaign by settlers against further Israeli redeployment in the West Bank. In late July 1998, the Civil Administration approved the construction of a new neighbourhood of 200 units in "Kiryat Arba". Further housing units, including mobile homes, were added to a number of other settlements, in particular near Nablus and in the area of Hebron still under occupation, where clashes between settlers and Palestinians have generated increasing tension. It was reported in August 1998 that 5,235 new units were under construction throughout the occupied territory.

18. Of particular concern are settlement activities in and around Jerusalem, where Palestinian residency rights are also under increasing threat. It has been estimated that, as at February 1998, up to 15,000 identity cards of Palestinian Jerusalemites may have been confiscated. In June 1998, an extremist settler group took over 4 housing units and a plot of land in the Silwan neighbourhood. Also in early June, the Ministry of the Interior approved the construction of 58 units in the area of the Mount of Olives. At the end of August 1998, the Israeli authorities gave final approval for the construction of 132 units in the Ras al-Amud neighbourhood of the city. On Jabal Abu Ghneim, the infrastructure stage of construction of the "Har Homa" settlement has been completed and the Government has declared that building is soon to begin. A plan for strengthening Israel's control over Jerusalem was announced in June, with the creation of a Greater Jerusalem umbrella municipality with administrative powers over an enlarged area encompassing nearby towns in Israel and a number of settlements in the West Bank, with the stated purpose of linking them and strengthening the Jewish majority in the entire area.

19. Reflecting the intensification of settlement activities, it was reported that the settler population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip grew by 3.3 per cent, to a total of 169,339 in the first six months of 1998, with 163,173 settlers in the West Bank and 6,166 in the Gaza Strip. In addition, some 180,000 settlers are estimated to be living in the Jerusalem area. The situation is further aggravated by the accelerated pace of demolition of Palestinian houses by the Israeli authorities. Since the beginning of 1998, some 112 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the West Bank and 14 in East Jerusalem, resulting in the displacement of over 440 Palestinians. As at August 1998, some 1,800 Palestinian homes were reportedly targeted for demolition and were being destroyed at the rate of about one a day.

20. The presence of settlements further exacerbates an already tense situation because of the provocative actions of extremist and armed settler groups. On numerous occasions, settlers have moved illegally into Palestinian areas, forcefully occupying housing or beginning the construction of new housing under Israeli police protection. Violent confrontations with Palestinian civilians have often ensued. The Temporary International Presence in Hebron, the international observer force set up in 1994, has expressed concern at the aggressive behaviour of settlers in the city and their increased verbal and physical attacks against Palestinians and their property. On 11 June 1998, the Israeli army authorized the creation of civil defence militias which operate alongside Israeli police and security forces inside settlements in the West Bank, beginning with the largest settlements of "Ma'ale Adumim" and "Givat Ze'ev" near Jerusalem, and "Ariel" south of Nablus.

21. Another issue of great concern to the Committee is the continued imprisonment of a large number of Palestinians in Israel (a total of 3,228 as at August 1998, to whom must be added Palestinians held under administrative detention or jailed in facilities run by the Israeli Defence Forces).

Information reviewed by the human rights treaty bodies indicates that the Israeli authorities have continued to use psychological and physical torture against Palestinian detainees, resulting in a considerable deterioration of their health. In that regard, the Committee called upon Israel to respect its obligations under human rights treaties and the Fourth Geneva Convention and to release the prisoners in implementation of the bilateral agreements signed to date.

22. The Committee observed with great concern that, during the year, the Palestinian economy continued to suffer, in particular owing to the prolonged closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the resulting fragmentation of the territory under the Palestinian Authority, which restricted the movement of workers and goods, caused growing hardships and led to a decline in output, exports, investment and income. Economic conditions in the Gaza Strip were particularly precarious, with an unemployment rate of some 30 per cent. Unemployment in the West Bank was around 20 per cent. Overall, there had been a steady deterioration of the Palestinian economy since the signing of the 1993 agreement, with gross national product per capita declining by at least 20 per cent in real terms.

23. The Committee also expressed concern at the reports of water shortages in the occupied Palestinian territory, which were seriously harming Palestinian agriculture and causing severe difficulties, particularly in view of the fact that Israel continues to control and utilize Palestinian water resources freely for its own needs and those of the settlements. Increasing industrial pollution, including groundwater pollution, resulting from Israeli industrial activity in the occupied territory also emerged as an issue for concern. While noting with appreciation that some donor countries had agreed to finance a major drilling project in the southern West Bank, the Committee considered that ultimately only the restoration of the rights of Palestinians to their own natural resources would resolve this serious problem.

24. The Committee was encouraged to note that, despite the growing difficulties faced by the Palestinian economy, the international donor community had continued to make sustained and determined efforts to meet emergency needs and to promote the economic and social development of the Palestinian people. The Committee also welcomed the continued assistance rendered to the Palestinian people by the United Nations family of organizations. It also noted with appreciation the continuing essential role played by the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories in serving as a focal point for coordinating and channelling the varied types of assistance provided by the United Nations to the Palestinian people.

25. The Committee also welcomed the important work carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing relief and social services to Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Committee expressed great concern, however, at the considerable deficit in the Agency's budget and the continued decline in the level of service delivered to Palestinian refugees. In the light of this, the Committee reiterated its call for stepped up international support for the vital humanitarian activities of UNRWA.

# Chapter V.
# Action taken by the Committee

## A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/49

26. In pursuance of its mandate and in response to the worsening situation with regard to prospects for a just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, the Committee multiplied its efforts to mobilize the international community in support of the Palestinian people, in cooperation with United Nations bodies, intergovernmental organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and others, as indicated below.

### 1. Action in the Security Council and the General Assembly

#### (a) Resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly

27. The Chairman and members of the Committee participated actively in the second and third resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly dealing with the item entitled "Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory". Following the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General (A/ES-10/16-S/1997/798 and Add.1), pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/3 of 15 July 1997, the emergency special session was reconvened on 13 November 1997 at the request of the Permanent Representative of Yemen, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of October 1997, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in New York, and the Permanent Representative of Colombia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

28. The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement in which he called upon the Assembly to express the position and will of the international community in a clear and forthright manner, and to adopt measures that would restore respect for international legitimacy and thus help to move the process forward (A/ES-10/PV.6).

29. At the end of the debate, the General Assembly, by a recorded vote of 139 to 3, with 13 abstentions, adopted resolution ES-10/4 of 13 November 1997, in which it condemned the failure of the Government of Israel to comply with the provisions of two previous resolutions; reiterated its recommendation for the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention on measures to enforce the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; recommended to the Government of Switzerland, in its capacity as the depositary of the Geneva Convention, to undertake the necessary steps, including the convening of a meeting of experts, as soon as possible and with a target date not later than the end of February 1998; called for reinjecting momentum into the stalled Middle East peace process and for the implementation of the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as for the upholding of the principles of the process, including the exchange of land for peace; and decided to adjourn its tenth emergency special session temporarily and to authorize the President of the most recent General Assembly to resume its meetings upon request from Member States.

30. The tenth emergency special session was again reconvened on 17 March 1998 at the request of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in his capacity as the Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of March 1998, and by the Permanent Representative of Colombia in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The Acting Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement in which he called upon the Government of Israel to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the recommendations of the General Assembly, and to cooperate fully in the preparatory work aimed at the convening of the meeting of experts and the proposed conference of High Contracting Parties (A/ES-10/PV.8).

31. At the end of the debate, the General Assembly, by a recorded vote of 120 to 3, with 5 abstentions, adopted resolution A/RES/ES-10/5 of 17 March 1998, in which it reiterated its condemnation of the failure of the Government of Israel to comply with the provisions of previous resolutions; reiterated all of the demands made in those resolutions and stressed the necessity of the full and immediate implementation by Israel, the occupying Power, of those demands; reiterated once again its recommendation concerning the convening of a conference on measures to enforce the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; reiterated its recommendation to the Government of Switzerland to undertake the necessary preparatory steps with regard to the convening of such a conference, including the convening of a meeting of experts; decided to extend the target date for the convening of the meeting of experts until the end of April 1998; and decided to adjourn the tenth emergency special session temporarily and to authorize the President of the most recent General Assembly to resume its meeting upon request from Member States.

### (b) Security Council meeting, 30 June 1998

32. Following the decision by the Government of Israel to further expand the boundaries of Jerusalem and create an umbrella municipality that would include a number of settlements in the West Bank, the Security Council, at the request of the Permanent Representative of the Sudan, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of June 1998, held two meetings on 30 June 1998 to consider the situation in the occupied Arab territories. The Chairman of the Committee intervened in the debate, expressing the hope that the Security Council would take timely measures, with the support of the sponsors of the peace process, to put an end to the unilateral decisions concerning control over the Holy City of Jerusalem, which must remain the living symbol of peaceful coexistence among religions and peoples that are different yet complementary (see S/PV.3900 (Resumption)).

33. In a statement issued by its President on 13 July 1998, the Security Council recognized the importance and sensitivity of the issue of Jerusalem to all parties; expressed its support for the decision of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel, in accordance with the Declaration of Principles, that the permanent status negotiations should cover the issue of Jerusalem; and called upon the parties to avoid actions which might prejudice the outcome of those negotiations. The Council also stated that it considered the decision by the Government of Israel to broaden the jurisdiction and planning boundaries of Jerusalem a serious and damaging development, called upon Israel not to proceed with that decision and not to take any other steps which would prejudice the outcome of the permanent status negotiations, and to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and

responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Expressing support for the efforts of the Government of the United States of America to end the stalemate in the peace process, the Council called upon the parties to respond positively to those efforts; noted that the Palestinian side had already given agreement in principle to the proposals of the United States; and expressed the hope that the permanent status negotiations could resume and progress could be made towards the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Council also decided to keep Israeli actions under review.

### (c) Communication addressed to the President of the Security Council

34. In a letter dated 17 February 1998 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/134), the Acting Chairman of the Committee referred to proposals to streamline the standing agenda of the Council by deleting items that had not been considered for a certain period of time. He indicated that the Committee objected to the deletion of items related to the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the Palestine question and the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, which were of utmost concern not only to the Committee but also to the majority of Member States. He stated that, pending a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which was the question of Palestine, in accordance with international legitimacy, those items should remain on the list, as they continued to engage the responsibility of the Security Council with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security.

### (d) Request for the inclusion of an item entitled "Bethlehem 2000" in the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly

35. In response to a request made by the Committee at its 237th meeting on 16 April 1998, the members of its Bureau addressed a letter to the Secretary-General dated 15 May 1998 (A/53/141), recommending the inclusion of an item entitled "Bethlehem 2000" in the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. In the explanatory memorandum annexed to the letter, the Bureau members stressed the significance of holding the millennial celebration in a global vision of hope and peace for all peoples at Bethlehem, one of the most historic and religiously significant sites on Earth. They called for the mobilization of international support for the undertaking by the Palestinian Authority through financial contributions, investment, expertise and promotion of international awareness, and for the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution in that regard.

## 2. Participation by the Chairman of the Committee in international conferences and meetings

36. The Chairman of the Committee participated in a number of high-level meetings of intergovernmental bodies concerned with the question of Palestine and contributed to their deliberations in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as follows:

(a) **Eighth Islamic Summit Conference, Tehran, 9–11 December 1997.** At the 236th meeting of the Committee, the Chairman reported on the resolutions adopted by the Eighth Islamic Summit Conference, which had reaffirmed support for the peace process, had expressed concern over the unilateral actions by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and had called upon the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to take the necessary measures (see A/53/72-S/1998/156, annex V, resolutions 1/8-P (IS), 2/8-P (IS) and 6/8-P (IS));

(b) **Twenty-fifth session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Doha, 15–19 March 1998.** The Chairman informed the Committee at its 236th meeting that the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers had adopted a communiqué calling, *inter alia*, upon its members to commemorate appropriately the fiftieth anniversary of the dispossession of the Palestinian people, and requesting Islamic States which had established relations with Israel within the framework of the peace process, to reconsider such relations (see A/53/95-S/1998/311, annex);

(c) **Bethlehem 2000 Participants Conference, Brussels, 11–12 May 1998.** The Chairman attended the Bethlehem 2000 Participants Conference at the invitation of Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO and President of the Palestinian Authority, and reported to the Committee at its 238th meeting that the Conference had been successful in mobilizing substantial international support for the various aspects of the Bethlehem 2000 project, and that President Arafat had welcomed the Committee's engagement to do everything possible to heighten awareness of the project within the United Nations;

(d) **Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 18–20 May 1998.** In its final communiqué, the Ministerial Meeting, *inter alia*, expressed support for the draft resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly to enable the full participation of Palestine in the work of the United Nations and all of its

subsidiary organs, and reiterated that the participation of Israel in the work of the General Assembly must be in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations;

(e) **Sixty-eighth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity and thirty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, Ouagadougou, 4–10 June 1998.** In its resolution on the question of Palestine, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish its own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, called for implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session and for the continuation of the peace process in accordance with the relevant resolutions, and invited the support of the member States of OAU for the Bethlehem 2000 project (see A/53/179, annex I, resolution CM/Dec/413(LXVIII));

(f) **Twelfth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, Durban, South Africa, 29 August–3 September 1998.** The Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries reiterated their support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return and to an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital; expressed confidence that Palestine would enjoy full membership in the United Nations in the near future; and reiterated that the representation of Israel in the work of the General Assembly must be in conformity with international law and that the credentials of Israel did not cover the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

37. The Chairman of the Committee also spoke on behalf of the Committee at the meeting of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, in observance of the Week of Solidarity with Peoples of All Colonial Territories Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights, held at United Nations Headquarters, on 22 May 1998.

38. The Committee also continued to follow with great interest the activities of other intergovernmental organizations relating to the question of Palestine, in particular the European Union, the decisions and resolutions of United Nations bodies and agencies, notably the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights and the Committee against Torture, and the positive efforts made by many Governments. The Committee noted the increasing concern of the international community over the stalemate in the peace process and the aggravation of tensions in the region, and welcomed its determination to continue to make efforts to restart the negotiations and to achieve a just peace on the basis of the agreements already reached between the parties.

## B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 52/49 and 52/50

39. In carrying out its programme of meetings in the various regions, the Committee continued to give priority to promoting the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the effective implementation of the agreements reached between the parties, and to mobilizing international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people.

40. In accordance with the authorization given to it by the General Assembly in resolution 52/49, the Committee again adjusted its programme as necessary in order to meet the evolving situation in the most effective and constructive manner, while keeping in mind the continuing financial constraints facing the Organization. The Committee expressed its great appreciation to the Governments of Belgium, Chile and Egypt for having provided venues and facilities for important events sponsored by the Committee.

41. In the course of the past year, the Committee, through its Bureau, developed fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation on the question of Palestine with States members of the European Union. The Bureau held periodic meetings with representatives of Luxembourg, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Austria, in their capacity as holders of the Presidency of the European Union, on furthering cooperation between the Committee and those three members of the European Union. The Bureau was encouraged by the exchange of views with the members of the European Union, as well as by the growing understanding between the two sides. The Bureau was also grateful to the members of the European Union for their strong position in support of the peace process and substantial economic assistance to the Palestinian people. Both sides agreed to continue the fruitful dialogue on issues of common interest.

42. The Bureau also held useful and constructive meetings with the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the Under- Secretary-General for Public Information on key elements of the implementation of its programme of work.

### 1. Conference in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

43. The Conference in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was held at Brussels, on 24 and 25 February 1998, in cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States.

44. The Conference was attended by many high-level participants, including Erik Derycke, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, who opened the meeting and spoke on behalf of the host country. Among the distinguished speakers were Hennadiy Udovenko, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations; Carlos Lemos Simmonds, Vice-President of Colombia; Azeddine Laraki, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; and Said Kamal, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States for Palestinian Affairs. The Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO and President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, attended the Conference and made an important statement. Statements were also made by the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, high-level representatives of Member States, and by representatives of OAU and the Islamic Development Bank.

45. A number of eminent personalities from various parts of the world, including Palestinians and Israelis, participated in an exchange of views on the following themes: promoting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people: a key to peace in the Middle East; the need to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people and promote economic and social development; and the Middle East peace process: the current situation and prospects.

46. The organizers of the Conference issued concluding remarks, in which they voiced concern at the stalemate in the peace process caused by setbacks and obstacles put in place by the Government of Israel. They referred to the violation by Israel of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, its settlement policies, attempts at altering the demographic, historical and cultural character and status of Jerusalem and the imposition of an economic blockade on the Palestinian territory. The organizers emphasized the fact that, while the world was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the rights of the Palestinian people continue to be denied. They underlined the fact that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands, including Jerusalem, must be brought to an end without delay. The organizers also reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects.

47. A comprehensive report containing the proceedings of the Conference will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

### 2. Seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations

48. In accordance with previous decisions to streamline its programme of meetings, and in the light of the need to redeploy funds towards other initiatives, the Committee decided not to hold the annual meeting of consultations with the coordinating committees of non-governmental organizations in 1998, and to review that decision in the context of its programme for 1999.

49. In response to a request made by members of the North American Coordinating Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations, the Bureau of the Committee met informally with some members of the Coordinating Committee in New York on 2 February 1998 for an exchange of views with regard to current priorities in the work of the Committee and future cooperation with the North American non-governmental organizations.

#### (a) European Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations

50. The European Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine with the theme "Action by non-governmental organizations in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people", was held at Brussels, on 26 February 1998, after the Conference in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The participants included representatives of European non-governmental organizations, Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations, a delegation of Palestine, and a number of panellists, including Palestinians and Israelis.

51. The following topics were discussed by the participants: the Middle East peace process: current situation and prospects; the European position and the policy of the European Union; and international law, world public opinion and the role of non-governmental organizations. In their final statement, the non-governmental organizations expressed deep concern at the stalemate in the negotiations, resulting in particular from the unilateral actions of the Government of Israel. They reiterated their commitment to a just and lasting peace based on self-determination for the Palestinian people, an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

52. The report of the Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

### (b) International Meeting of Non-Governmental Organizations

53. The United Nations International Meeting of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, with the theme "The question of Palestine: the international responsibility 50 years later", was held at Cairo, on 25 and 26 April 1998. The Meeting was attended by panellists from various regions, including Palestinians and Israelis, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations, Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and a delegation of Palestine.

54. Panel discussions were held on the international responsibility fifty years later, and on support by non-governmental organizations for international efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine. In their final statement, the participating non-governmental organizations noted with satisfaction that the meeting had been convened in the Middle East for the first time and urged that future events for non-governmental organizations also be held in the region. They reiterated their commitment to a just and lasting peace based on self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. In support of that goal, the non-governmental organizations reaffirmed their recognition of the State of Palestine in conformity with the 1988 Declaration of Independence, and looked to 1999 as the year of the State of Palestine. The participating non-governmental organizations also stated that they would work with their constituents and the public to prepare them for the declaration of the independent Palestinian State.

55. The report of the Meeting will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

### (c) Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People

56. A seminar, with the theme "Facing the challenges of the year 2000: promoting Palestinian national development", was held at Cairo, on 27 and 28 April 1998. The participants included Palestinian and Israeli panellists, representatives of Governments, including the host Government, representatives of United Nations bodies and agencies, representatives of intergovernmental organizations, and a delegation of Palestine.

57. The following topics were discussed by the participants: the Palestinian development plan; gathering information for future planning: the results of the Palestinian census; and overcoming obstacles: the role of the international community. Summarizing the results of the Seminar, the Chairman noted that economic measures could not by themselves resolve fundamental political issues and that political action required a favourable economic environment in order to succeed. There was a consensus among the participants regarding the responsibility of the international community, including the United Nations, Member States and intergovernmental organizations, for ending 30 years of occupation and 50 years of dispossession of the Palestinian people. The Committee was encouraged that many speakers at the seminar expressed the view that the establishment of a Palestinian State was inevitable, and expressed their support for it as the only viable solution.

58. The report of the Seminar was issued as a document of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for consideration under the relevant agenda items, at the request of the Chairman of the Committee (A/53/152–E/1998/71). It will also be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

### (d) Latin American and Caribbean Seminar and Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine

59. The Latin American and Caribbean Seminar and Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations, with the theme "Achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine – the role of Latin America and the Caribbean", was held at Santiago, from 26 to 29 May 1998. The participants included representatives of Governments, a representative of the host Government, representatives of United Nations bodies and agencies, and a delegation of Palestine, as well as experts from Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions, including Palestinian and Israeli panellists.

60. The following issues were discussed by the participants: the current political situation; the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; and the role of Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine through solidarity and assistance. In a final document adopted at the conclusion of the meeting, the participants emphasized the significance of the role of Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. They particularly welcomed the holding of the meeting in Chile because of its prominent role in the region and in international bodies, the presence of many Chileans of Palestinian descent, and its support for Palestinian rights. The participants called upon the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to play an important role in

promoting Palestinian efforts to achieve independence and sovereignty, in particular by establishing diplomatic representation in the area under the Palestinian Authority and by supporting the upgrading of the status of Palestine at the United Nations. For their part, non-governmental organizations decided to assign priority to humanitarian, social and cultural assistance to the Palestinian people, as well as the promotion of dialogue and joint activities by the Palestinian and Jewish communities in Latin America and the Caribbean with the objective of achieving better mutual understanding and promoting support for the peace process.

61. The report of the Seminar and Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

### (e) North American Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations

62. The North American Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations with the theme "Fifty years of dispossession of the Palestinian people", was held at United Nations Headquarters, from 15 to 17 June 1998. Participants included representatives of non-governmental organizations from Canada and the United States of America, Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies, and intergovernmental organizations, a delegation of Palestine, and panellists, including Palestinians and Israelis.

63. Papers were presented by the panellists on the following topics: memory: remembering the Palestinian history; conscience: strategies for contesting the future; and from memory to conscience: the consequences for the work of non-governmental organizations in North America. In addition, workshops were held, at which the participating non-governmental organizations decided on a number of activities to be carried out in future, in particular regarding Israeli settlements, Jerusalem, the closures, promoting respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention, and refugees, as well as monitoring of the media in order to ensure fairness and accuracy.

64. The report of the Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

## 3. Research, monitoring and publications

65. The Committee continued to attach great importance to the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights and requested it to continue its established programme of work, including studies and publications, the further development of the electronic information system United Nations Information System on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL), the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority, and the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

66. Accordingly, the Division continued to respond to requests for information and to prepare and disseminate throughout the world the following publications:

(a) Monthly bulletin covering action by the Committee, United Nations bodies and agencies, and intergovernmental organizations concerned with the question of Palestine;

(b) Periodic bulletin entitled "Developments related to the Middle East peace process";

(c) Monthly chronology of events relating to the question of Palestine, based on media reports and other sources;

(d) Reports of meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(e) Special bulletin on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(f) Annual compilation of relevant resolutions, decisions and statements by the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.

67. In addition, the Division published a study entitled "The status of Jerusalem". It also updated and reissued its information notes on the work of the Committee and the Division, on the activities of the United Nations and those of non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine, and on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Committee expressed the wish that the Division prepare a new pamphlet on the question of Palestine, in close cooperation with the Department of Public Information.

## 4. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

68. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant technical services of the United Nations Secretariat, continued to develop UNISPAL, as mandated by the General Assembly in 1991. This included a further upgrading of hardware and software, the expansion of the collection of documents, improvement of a database relating to non-governmental organizations, and the establishment and further development of the question of Palestine and UNISPAL sites, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal> and <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf>, respectively, on the Internet.

69. The technical resources of the Division were also used to assist in the electronic conversion of the records of the

United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, in pursuance of the mandate given by the General Assembly in resolution 51/129 of 13 December 1996 and the understanding reached with regard to the redeployment of funds from savings generated in carrying out the programme of work of the Committee.

### 5. Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

70. Two staff members of the Palestinian Authority from, respectively, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and the Negotiations Affairs Department, participated in a training programme conducted by the Division from September to December 1997, in conjunction with the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. They familiarized themselves with various aspects of the work of the United Nations, attended various briefings and meetings of relevant committees and bodies of the United Nations, and conducted research on topics of interest to them.

### 6. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

71. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed, on 1 December 1997, at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. On the occasion of the observance at Headquarters, in addition to a solemn meeting of the Committee and other activities, an exhibit entitled "At home in Palestine", was presented by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine, under the auspices of the Committee. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day had also been observed in many other cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

72. In adopting its programme of work, the Committee decided that a similar event would be organized in connection with the observance of the Day in 1998.

## Chapter VI. Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/51

73. The Committee noted that, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 52/51, the Department of Public Information continued its special information programme on the question of Palestine, which included the convening of a regional seminar and an international seminar on the theme "Prospects for peace".

74. In cooperation with the Government of India, the Department convened a regional seminar at New Delhi, on 3 and 4 February 1998. Panellists included distinguished officials and analysts from the Palestinian Authority, Israel, neighbouring countries and the United States of America, as well as the host country. Their presentations were followed by an exchange of views with the participants in the audience, which consisted primarily of representatives of prominent media organizations from the Asian region, as well as the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Representatives of Member States and of specialized agencies based at New Delhi participated in the seminar as observers.

75. The international seminar was held, in cooperation with the Government of the Czech Republic at Prague, on 24 and 25 June 1998. The format of the seminar was the same as that held at New Delhi and included the participation of distinguished officials and analysts from the Palestinian Authority, Israel, neighbouring countries, the United States of America, Europe and the host country, as well as prominent media representatives from Western and Eastern Europe, the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

76. The Department provided press coverage, in English and French, of all meetings held at United Nations Headquarters, including those of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Coverage in English and French was also provided to the seminars and symposia held under the auspices of the Committee in Belgium, Chile and Egypt. Press releases were issued on the texts of the statements by the Secretary-General.

77. From September 1997 to August 1998, the Dissemination and Communications Unit of the Department, in accordance with its established pattern, distributed 9,436 hard copies of documents and, through electronic mail, 74 titles of documents related to the question of Palestine.

78. The Public Inquiries Unit of the Department responded to 481 requests for information concerning Middle East issues, including the question of Palestine. Its Group Programmes and Community Liaison Unit organized nine briefings on Middle East issues, including the question of Palestine. One briefing was devoted exclusively to the question of Palestine.

79. From 15 September to 7 November 1997, the Department organized a training programme at Headquarters for a group of 10 Palestinian media practitioners in order to strengthen their professional capacity as information media personnel.

80. The quarterly publication *UN Chronicle* has continued to cover all important developments related to the question of Palestine, including: action taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session and at its tenth emergency special session; action taken by the Security Council; special coverage in the "Systemwatch" section of the publication of the activities of UNRWA, as well as other relevant activities of the United Nations system. The *UN Chronicle* also carried an interview with Ibra Deguène Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which was conducted by a group of the Palestinian media practitioners undertaking the training programme at United Nations Headquarters.

81. The Radio and Central News Service of the Department covered extensively all aspects of Palestine and related issues in daily news bulletins and weekly current affairs magazine programmes, in both official and non-official languages for regional and worldwide dissemination. The Service also produced a four-part special series in Arabic entitled "United Nations assistance to the Palestinian People", based on interviews conducted in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by the United Nations radio officer with United Nations officials, personnel of the Palestinian Authority and United Nations local staff. The Service widely covered in news magazines United Nations-sponsored regional conferences on the question of Palestine held at Athens, New Delhi, Brussels and Santiago, as well as the financial crisis of UNRWA. Meetings of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly were also covered in news bulletins and news magazine programmes, in various languages.

82. The Media Division of the Department taped on video all the activities of the visit of the Secretary-General to the Middle East, including the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. The footage and photographs were made available to news syndicators and used in the television production "Year in Review".

83. The Department cooperated with the Division for Palestinian Rights in the media promotion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and provided assistance in organizing the special exhibit in connection with the observance, entitled "At home in Palestine". The observance of the Day presented special opportunities for cooperating with local non-governmental organizations in the organization of joint events and programmes to draw attention to the issue of Palestinian rights. Print and electronic media coverage of the event in most of the countries concerned was extensive. Panel discussions and forums, with the participation of officials from Governments, delegations of Palestine, United Nations officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations, were among several activities organized by the United Nations information centres at Mexico City, New Delhi, Ouagadougou, Rabat, Sydney, Australia, and Tunis. The Centre at New Delhi collaborated with the Ministry of External Affairs, the Forum of Indian non-governmental organizations and Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Embassy of Palestine. The Centre at Sydney, in cooperation with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission of Australia, organized a public forum to highlight the rights of the Palestinian people. The Centre at Washington, D.C., organized meetings for the 10 Palestinian media practitioners to observe the press conference at the White House and the Department of State of the United States of America, and provided administrative and logistical support for those journalists. The Centre in Paris arranged interviews with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA with *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Libération* and *La Croix*. The Centre at Tokyo arranged interviews for the Education Director of UNRWA, with *Yomiuri Shinbun* and *The Japan Times*. Many centres also dealt with the question of Palestine in their periodic newsletters and bulletins, issued special information materials in local languages, and made relevant documents available.

84. The global network of United Nations information centres and information services actively promoted the central issues relating to the question of Palestine, by organizing media activities and special events, producing newsletters and regularly disseminating relevant information materials made available from Headquarters. In many cases, the material disseminated was translated into local languages. Six information centres provided media relations and logistical support for major seminars held on the question of Palestine. The Centre at Cairo lent such support, including assigning the National Press Officer to cover the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, followed by the International Meeting of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine. The centres and services at Brussels and Santiago also provided logistical, administrative and informational support. The Department, in cooperation with and with the assistance of the centres at New Delhi and Prague, organized the regional and international seminars mentioned in paragraphs 73 to 75 above. The Centre at Cairo, the Centre and Service at Beirut and the office of the United Nations Development Programme at Amman provided assistance to the visit by members of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories to

Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, from 21 to 31 July 1998.

85. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has initiated cooperative arrangements with the Library and Documentation Centre of Al-Quds University at Jerusalem.

# Chapter VII. Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

86. A crucial stage has been reached in the long history of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. The dispossession of the Palestinian people has now passed the half-century mark. Of the two States envisaged under General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, only the Jewish State has come into being, while the Palestinian people still yearns for the establishment of its own State on its national soil. Four million Palestinians still live in refugee camps under precarious conditions. Despite the undeniable achievements of the peace process since 1993, most of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including Jerusalem, remain under occupation, vulnerable to exploitation of resources, land confiscation and encroaching settlements. The area under the Palestinian Authority remains fragmented, its social and economic life jeopardized by damaging closures, lack of free passage and access to the outside world. Thousands of Palestinians are still in Israeli jails.

87. The continuation of this unjust situation and the widespread suffering it entails is unacceptable, particularly since agreements outlining the framework for a peaceful solution were already reached by the parties. The Committee believes that, as humankind prepares to enter the new millennium, it is incumbent upon the co-sponsors of the peace process, the Security Council and the international community as a whole to do everything within their power to achieve peace and reconciliation in the Middle East, which is so essential for international peace and security. In this context, the Committee expressed the hope that the Wye River Memorandum, signed on 23 October 1998, would be fully implemented, provide the much-needed impetus to the Oslo process and help the parties to move forward to the negotiations on permanent status issues.

88. To be truly lasting, peace must be based on solid foundations of justice, respect for human rights and humanitarian law, and relations of equality and partnership between neighbours. The policies and practices of occupation, which seek to create actuality on the ground and to permanently alter the demographic composition of the occupied territory, violate the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood and make the achievement of real peace impossible. The international community, in particular the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, must intensify its efforts to ensure protection for the Palestinian people, pending the achievement of a final settlement. The Committee, accordingly, will remain fully engaged in efforts to convene the conference requested by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session.

89. The Committee reaffirms that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a satisfactory settlement based on international legitimacy is reached. The Committee reiterates that the involvement of the United Nations in the peace process, both as the guardian of international legitimacy and in the mobilization and provision of international assistance for development, is essential for the successful outcome of the peace efforts. As the organ of the General Assembly established to deal with the question of Palestine, the Committee pledges itself to continue to mobilize the international community at the governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental levels, in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of this question, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

90. The Committee considers that its programme of meetings in the various regions and its cooperation with non-governmental organizations have played a useful role in heightening international awareness of the relevant issues and in achieving wider recognition of and support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In that regard, the Committee will continue to review and assess its programme in order to achieve maximum effectiveness in its programme of meetings and other activities, and to respond adequately to developments on the ground and in the peace process. Recommendations to that effect will be submitted in due course.

91. In response to the call by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO and President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, for the convening of the millennial celebration at Bethlehem in the context of a global vision of peace and reconciliation, the Committee has requested the inclusion of an item in the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly in order to mobilize wide international support for the event. It is the hope of the Committee that the Assembly will adopt a consensus resolution on this item. The Committee is also planning to

convene a Bethlehem 2000 international conference in Rome in early 1999. The Committee invites the greatest international participation in this major event.

92. The Committee stresses the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat in support of the objectives of the Committee and requests it to continue its programme of publications and other activities, in particular the further development of the UNISPAL collection, and the completion of the project for the modernization of the records of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority has demonstrated its usefulness and requests that it be continued.

93. The Committee also considers that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and public opinion of the relevant issues, and requests that it be continued, with the flexibility necessary in the light of new developments. The Committee believes that strengthening cooperation and coordination with the Department will help to enhance the special information programme on the question of Palestine and assist the Committee in the implementation of its mandate. The Committee is of the view that cooperation and coordination between the Department and the Division for Palestinian Rights should also be strengthened. The Committee requests the Department to give particular attention to the preparation of audio-visual and other informational materials aimed at the general public.

94. Wishing to make the greatest possible contribution to the achievement of a just and lasting peace during the difficult times that lie ahead, the Committee calls upon all States to join in this endeavour and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of the role of the Committee and to reconfirm its mandate with overwhelming support.

*Notes*

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/31/35).

[2] Ibid., *Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/32/35); ibid., *Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/33/35); ibid., *Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/34/35 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/35/35); ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/36/35); ibid., *Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/37/35 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/38/35); ibid., *Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/39/35); ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/40/35); ibid., *Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/41/35); ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/42/35); ibid., *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/43/35); ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/44/35); ibid., *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/45/35); ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/46/35); ibid., *Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/47/35); ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/48/35); ibid., *Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/49/35); ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/50/35); ibid., *Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/51/35); and ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/52/35).

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/52/35), chap. VII.

[5] Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/1 of 22 September 1992, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia did not participate in the work of the Committee.

[6] A/AC.183/1998/CRP.1.

[7] The observers at the Committee meetings were as follows: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam, as well as the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Palestine also participated as an observer.

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